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2013

Pilot Inventory of Community Partnerships: IARSLCE Conference 2013

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Pilot Inventory of Community Partnerships: IARSLCE Conference 2013

Abstract

Partnerships with community organizations create increased opportunities for universities to promote community-engaged research, teaching, and service. Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) mission states that the university is committed to "sustainable, university-community partnerships that enhance the educational, economic, and cultural vitality of the communities VCU serves." In recognition of its efforts, VCU is among a small number of institutions to be designated as very high research activity and community-engaged by the Carnegie Foundation. It is also a recipient of a NIH-funded Center for Translational and Sciences Award, which promotes community-engaged research.

In pursuit of the university's goal to become a national model for community engagement and regional impact, the Division of Community Engagement (DCE) and Office of Planning and Decision Support (OPDS) – with representatives from across the university - sought to identify current community-university partnerships during 2012-13. The team developed a Pilot Inventory of Community Partnerships (PICP) to test a university-wide data collection process. The findings are presented along with recommendations for improving the long-term ability to count and describe the university's partnerships. (This effort parallels the VCU Health System's plans for a similar pilot to identify and document outreach efforts.) The resulting baseline information presented here helps to achieve the University Level Initiative 4 strategy, "Define and collate community partnerships and determine measures to leverage assets." The information gathered will provide a resource to our VCU and Health System communities to collaborate, build on existing efforts, and identify gaps.

Keywords

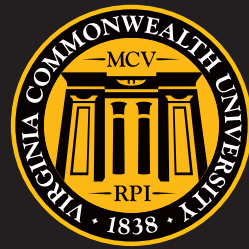
partnerships, higher education, community, community engagement, university-community

Disciplines

Higher Education

Comments

Presented at the annual meeting of the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, Omaha, Nebraska.



VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

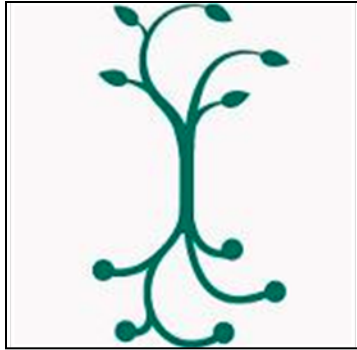
Pilot Inventory of Community Partnerships

IARSLCE Conference 2013

Virginia Commonwealth University

- Urban, research university
- 31,000 students
- Academic medical center
- #1 public art school

Recognition for Community Engagement



Recognized as 1 of 40 top community-engaged institutions by the Carnegie foundation

President's Higher Education Service Honor Roll, with highest distinction



Recipient of a NIH's CTSA grant

VCU's Quest for Distinction

Theme IV: Become a national model for community engagement and regional impact

- **Expand community engaged scholarship and service learning.**
- **Create** university-community partnerships with a focus on the key targeted areas of:
 - K-12 Education
 - Access to Health
 - Economic Development
 - Sustainability
- **Provide** strategic leadership in addressing sustainability challenges through curricular and service innovations and green facilities and operations.



Division of Community Engagement

Vision

- *VCU is a community of engaged citizens, working together changing lives.*

Mission

- *The VCU Division of Community Engagement mobilizes university-community partnerships that generate innovative solutions to societal challenges and prepares the engaged citizens of tomorrow.*



Purpose and Aims

- Identify key partnerships across the university
- Use standard definition and instrumentation
- Estimate the total number of partnerships
- Describe how partnerships are established, monitored, and evaluated across the university.
- These findings will lead to
 - improved methods for gathering these data on an annual basis.
 - support university allocation of resources to foster collaboration and strategic partnerships.

Methodology

- Deans and research center and institute directors at VCU were asked to identify one person in their unit to participate in the pilot (n=54).
- Web-based questionnaire (n=33)
- Interviews (n=20)

Questionnaire

- Estimate of the total number of partnerships within their unit
- Brief description of the process used for establishing, monitoring and evaluating partnerships.
- More detailed information about 5 “significant” partnerships (with at least one focused on teaching, service, research, and—where applicable—patient care):
 - geographic focus of the partnership,
 - connection to themes in the university’s strategic plan,
 - degree of formalization i.e. presence of MOUs/MOAs, and
 - resources exchanged.

Interviews

The interview schedule included the following questions:

- In the inventory, it was noted that your unit [does/does not] have a formal process for establishing partnerships, and that it [does/does not] have a formal process for monitoring or evaluating partnerships. Please tell us more about that.
- Based on what we asked you to provide, did you have some of this information readily available? What did you have to do to collect this information?
- [The strategic plan] states that VCU will “[C]ontribute to the economic, cultural and civic vitality of the region and the world through collaborative efforts ...” How do you, and how might we, consider measuring impact?
- Does your unit have the infrastructure necessary to systematically identify and describe community-university partnerships? If yes, please describe. If no, what resources would you need? What steps would need to be taken?
- As we make recommendations for how to systematically identify community-university partnerships, and ultimately tell the story of VCU’s involvement with the community, what further thoughts or recommendations do you have?

Definitions

A partnership is a sustained collaboration between institutions of higher education and communities for the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, information, and resources. Examples are research, capacity building, or economic development.

A significant partnership is one that “enabled [their] unit to make significant contributions to strategic objectives that support the [university’s strategic plan].”

Key Findings

- VCU has well-over 1,100 university-community partnerships.
- There is little existing unit- or university-level infrastructure available for documenting partnerships.
- Most units do not have formal processes for establishing, monitoring or evaluating partnerships.

Key Findings: Significant Partners

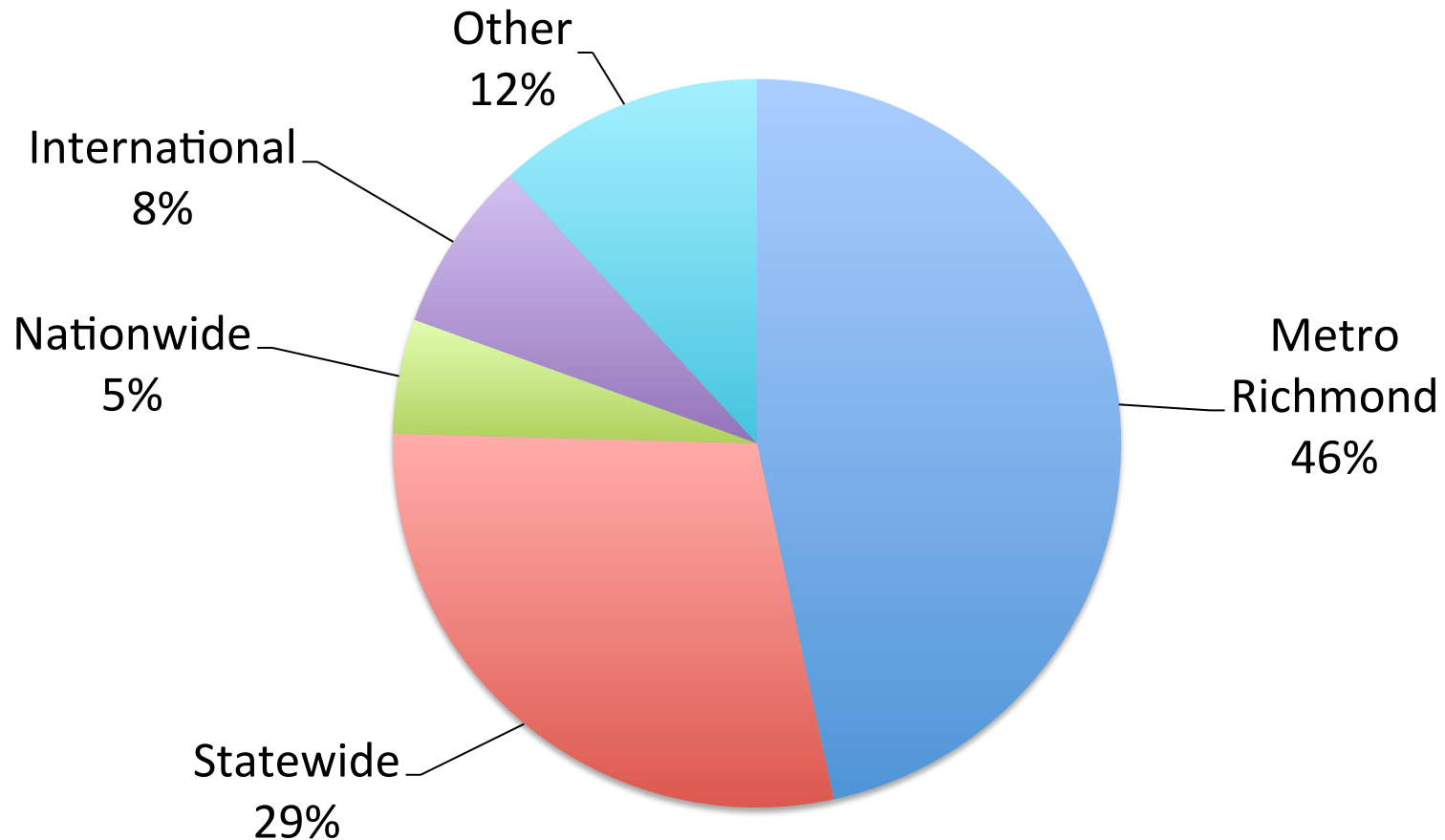
Among VCU's most significant partnerships identified in this effort:

- 46% are focused on **Metro Richmond**
- 56% focus on **education** and 34% on **access to health**
- 71% involve **more than one element of VCU's mission**: 32% incorporate service, 31% teaching, 26% research, and 11% patient care.

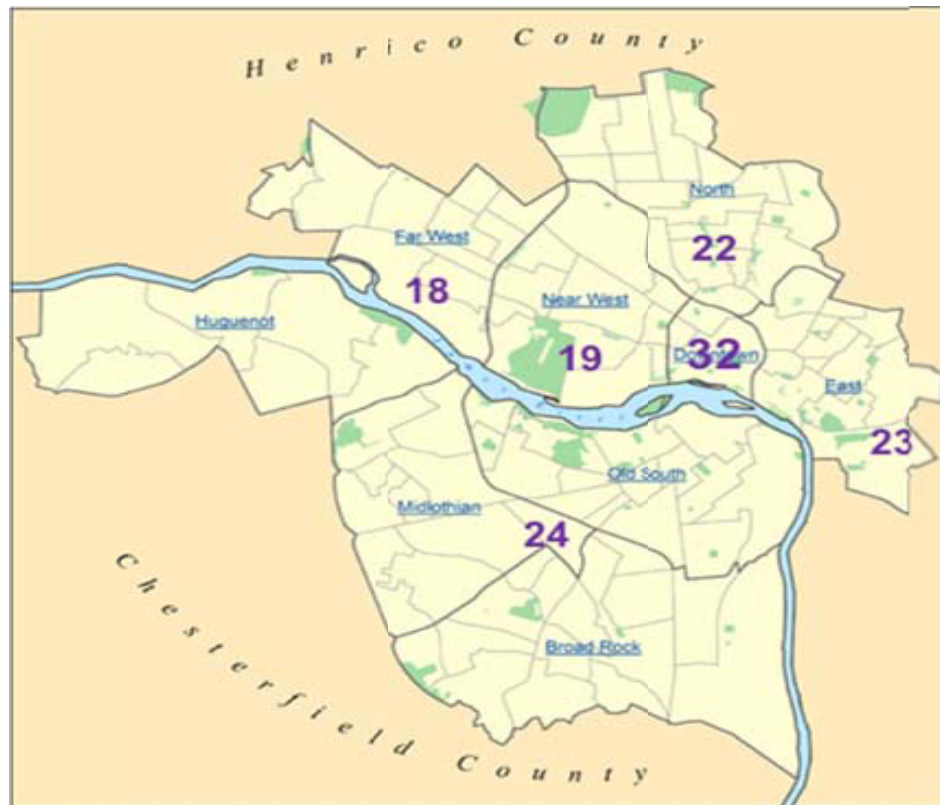
The **mutual investment of people** is most common.

- VCU units most frequently indicated that they share or provide community partners with faculty and staff time (26%) and access to faculty, staff, students and alumni (23%).
- Community partners most frequently share or provide access to employees and volunteers (23%) and access to community members (19%).

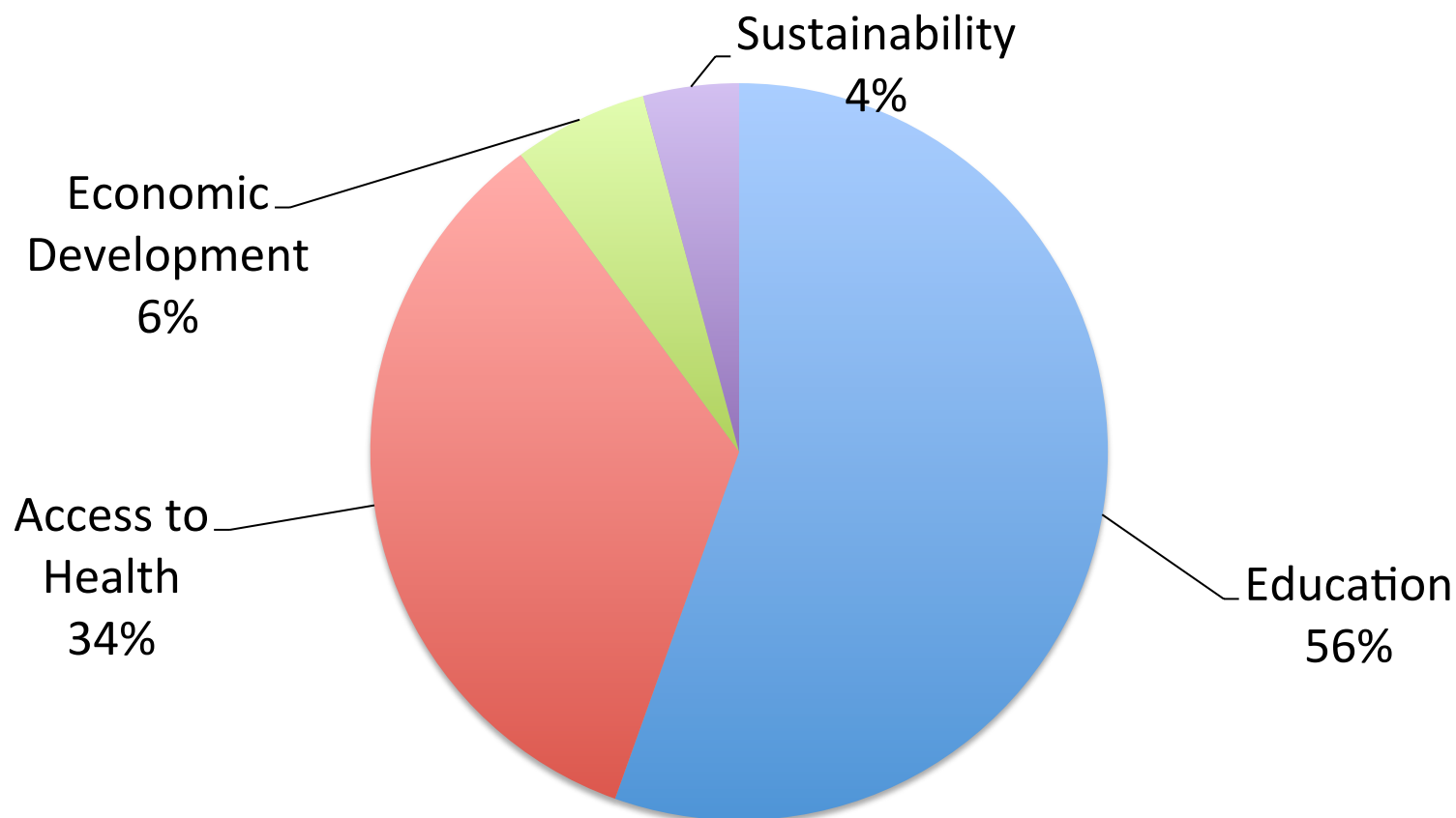
Geographic Focus Area of Significant Partnerships (n=118)



Number Of Significant Partnerships In Metro Richmond By Geographic Focus Area

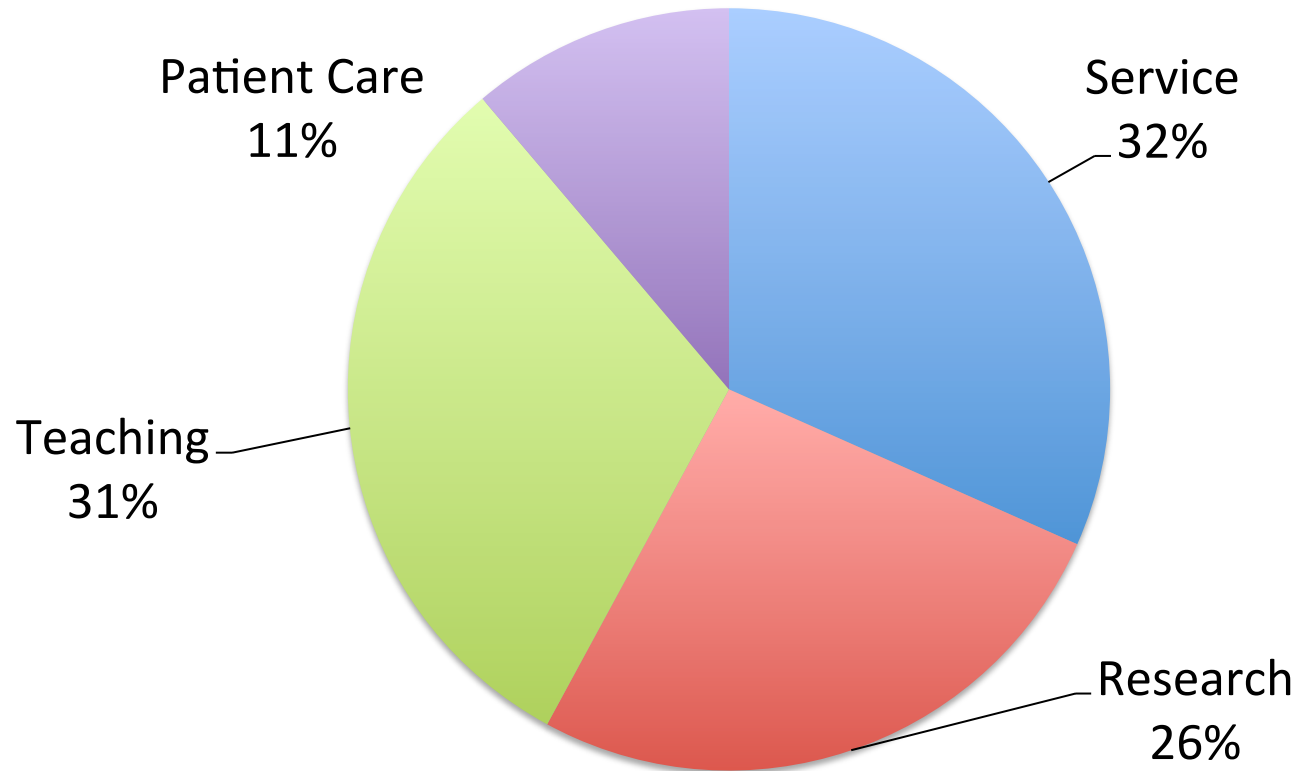


Quest Focus Area of Significant Partnerships (n=119)



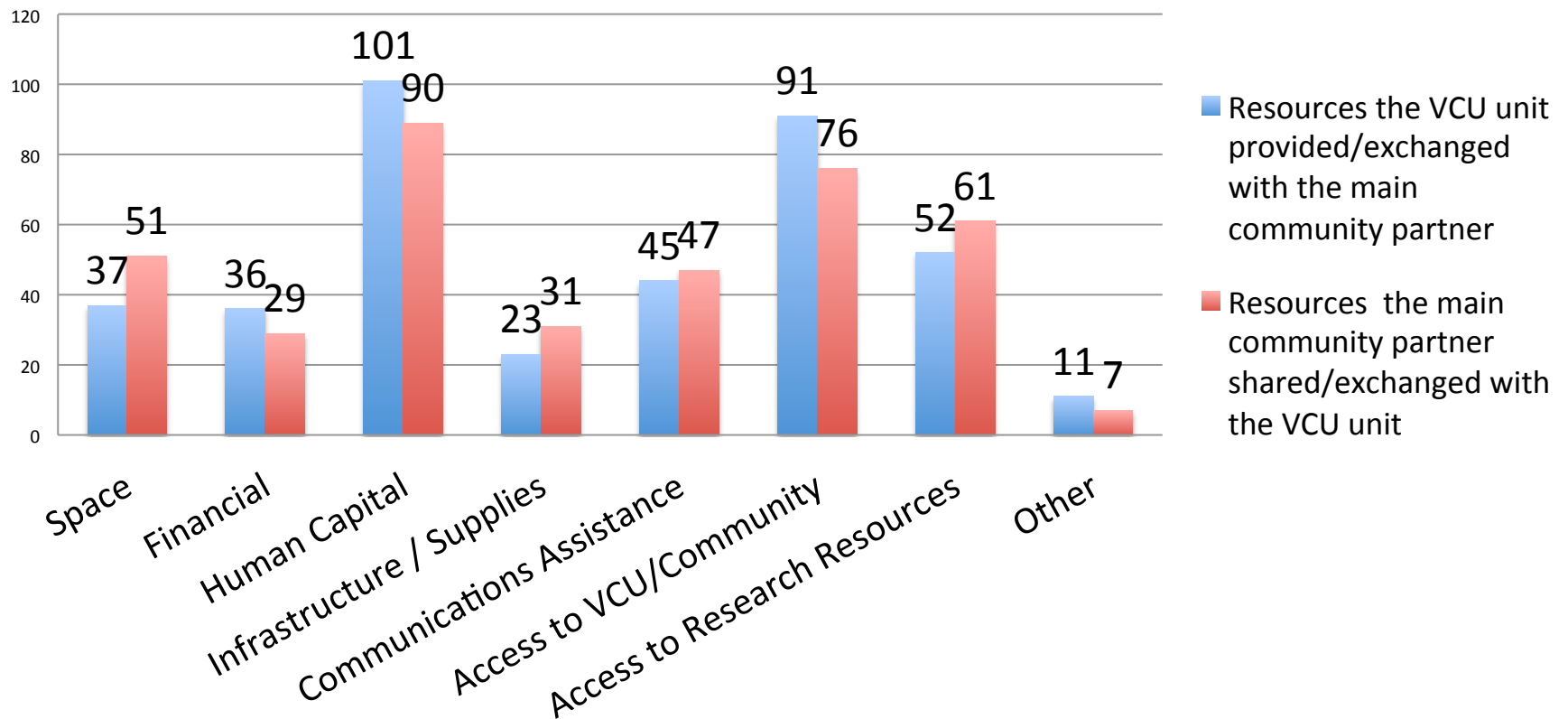
VCU

Elements of VCU's Mission Served by the Significant Partnerships (n=259)



Resources Exchanged Between VCU and the Main Community Partner,

of Significant Partnerships



Using the Information Gathered

- Interactive map
- VIVO
- Telling the story
- Process for MOUs
- Collaboration opportunities
- Carnegie re-classification

Recommendations

- Establish a workgroup to:
 - explore how data can be collected systematically and regularly using current resources, and
 - determine impact measures for inclusion in data collection processes.
- Coordinate collection of partnership data with other university efforts.
- Explore with General Counsel the need for university-wide procedures for developing, reviewing and approving partnership MOUs.

Division of Community Engagement

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